IF HE DROPPED DEAD.

WHAT WOULD RESULT IF THIS HAPPENED TO THE SIGNALMAN.

This Query Draws Out an Interesting Description of the Workings of the Automatic Signals—How They Are Operated In the Harlem Road Tunnel.

Two commuters occupied a seat in one of the suburban trains of the Harlem road, which was speeding through the Park avenue tunnel. They were discussing block signals and the possibilities of accidents in the tunnel, which are interesting topics to commuters always.

"Well, now, suppose an operator in one of these block signal stations in this tunnel after having set the white signal should drop dead, would not the consequences be simply awful?"

"They would indeed," answered the other.

Both men shuddered and became silent. They were wondering doubtless whether, after all, it was worth while to take their lives in their hands every day for the sake of elbow room in the country.

"What would happen," was asked of J. H. Franklin, general manager of the Harlem road, "if a block signal operator should drop dead?"

"Nothing at all," he replied, laughing, "except that the poor operator's place would have to be filled. Why? Because the signal would return automatically to danger. The train that next reached the block would stop, and the engineer would take steps to find out why he was not allowed to proceed. The flagman on duty at the signal station—there is one at each of the stations in the tunnel—would unquestionably by the time the train had arrived be possessed of the desired information.

"The block system in the tunnel," went on Mr. Franklin, "is the best in the world. We are now averaging about 470 trains a day through the tunnel—that is, of course, both ways. Of these 300 are passenger trains, and the others shop trains and engines—everything that takes up space in a block being called a train."

"What number of passengers does that involve?"

Mr. Franklin figured for a moment and then answered: "I should say a low estimate would be 60,000. If you were to seek a ratio of the persons killed to those carried in the history of the tunnel you would find it almost nil. There have been but two serious accidents in the tunnel. The first was before it had any block system, and the second was prior to the adoption of the automatic arrangement by which the signals, in case of any failure by the operators, will always secure safety."

The tunnel is two miles in length and has four tracks. The two in the center are for fast through trains, and those on the sides for the rapid transit trains to Mott Haven. Incoming trains run on the two eastern tracks and outgoing trains on those to the west. Block stations for north and south bound trains are directly opposite each other in the tunnel. Each station has an operator and a flagman. There are three forces at each station, one working from 7 a. m. to 3 p. m., one from 3 to 11 p. m., and one from 11 p. m to 7 a. m.

The automatic arrangement for the return of the red or danger signal after the white signal has been shown is the result of the replacing of short, releasing currents with rail circuits extending from tower to tower, thus providing against the possibility of operators "clearing" signals at the entrance to any block when any portion of the preceding train remains in the block, although the forward part of the latter train has passed out and performed its part in "unlocking" at the advance tower.

This change, it has been said, was seen to be desirable in the tunnel on account of the difficulty at times of operators seeing the tail lights or markers of passing trains and of knowing that all the train had been cleared.

In the present improved state of block signaling in the tunnel an operator cannot clear the signals governing any block when a car, a single pair of wheels or any metallic obstruction reaching from rail to rail is in the block. The operator is, in fact, prevented from clearing signals in any but the appointed way. The whole block and shifting and signaling apparatuses are so arranged that should there be any failure in or fracture of either the electric or mechanical parts the signals would at once assume and maintain the danger position.

The chance that both the all clear and caution signals would fail at once is very small, but if they should the signal operators, being familiar with the Morse alphabet for telegraphing and having wires at their command ordinarily used for announcing from comparatively distant points the approach of trains, recourse could be had to regular telegraphic communication, and trains moved past the signals set at danger by special orders.

The tunnel, in addition to its main system for block signaling, is provided with a secondary system, not necessary in the ordinary conditions under which trains are run. But the tunnel conditions tend to produce somewhat frequent failures in the proper working of all mechanical and electrical appliances, and the great traffic forbids any delay that ingenuity can circumvent. The object in providing the secondary locks and circuits is to prevent appreciable delay to trains should the regular system fail in displaying clear signals in unoccupied blocks.—New York World.

Business Got Brisk.

Meyer, the confectioner, stood behind his counter and gazed sadly at the huge pile of apple tarts which were beginning to grow stale, for during the last few days business had been unaccountably slack. Suddenly he bethought himself of a plan. Sitting down at his desk he wrote as follows:

Genuine Offer of Marriage—A young man of agreeable exterior and ample means desires to form the acquaintance of a lady with a view to make her his partner for life. Beauty and wealth not so much an object as a good character and amiable disposition. Young ladies who may feel inclined to cast their lot with him are hereby requested to call at Michael Meyer's confectionery establishment this afternoon at 3 o'clock, and as a recognition eat an apple tart.

A few minutes after 3 the whole stock of apple tarts were cleaned out.—Yankee Blade.

Of Two Evils.

Toodles—Which would you rather, Noodles, seem to be, a bigger fool than you are or be a bigger fool than you seem?

Noodles—I'd rather seem to be a bigger fool than I am.

Toodles—That's impossible.

Noodles—No. I—er—would rather be a bigger fool than I seem.

Toodles—That's impossible.—Boston Courier.

All Hope Lost.

"Shams proposed to Miss Slimpurse last night."

"Did she give him the least hope?"

"No. She accepted him."—Chicago Inter Ocean.

Valuable.

Mrs. Wickwire—The idea! Here is a story in the paper about a woman suing for $10,000 for the loss of only a thumb.

Mr. Wickwire—Perhaps it was the thumb she kept her husband under.—Indianapolis Journal.

Very Likely.

He—Our new schoolteacher has a very studious eye, hasn't he?

She—Yes. I presume that is because there is a pupil in it.—Detroit Free Press.

GALLANTRY AND OLD AGE.

Street Car Courtesy That Sometimes Takes an Unexpected Turn.

I have known a few old women in my time, but I have come to the conclusion that there are no old men. I knew he would growl at her when she offered him her seat in the crowded car, because I remembered experiences of my own in more impetuous days, and I tried to catch her eye and send her a telegram to desist from her gentle purpose, but her good heart and old fashioned deference to age made her blind, and after a minute's struggle to gather courage sufficient to rise in the crowded car she was standing before him saying timidly:

"Take this seat, sir."

He glared at her as the ogre in the fairy story always glared at the poor princess before he ate her up.

"Sit down!" he roared, stamping his foot, while his face grew lurid with rage. "Sit down, I tell you! When I get so old I can't stand up, I'll let you know. D'ye hear? I'll let you know!"

His voice ran up into an angry shriek, and the poor girl sank back into her place overwhelmed with confusion and shame and was carried many blocks beyond her street because she had not courage to lift her tear blinded eyes to see where she was or signal to the conductor.

I have had many object lessons of the kind, although the one just related was the most unpleasant, and I thought I knew enough to keep out of such difficulties myself, but the other day the North Side cable car was the field of my surrender. It was in the morning, and, as usual, every seat was filled and the aisles were crowded. A white haired man boarded the car and looked hopelessly around for a seat. He was feeble and worn and old and was pushed and elbowed from one position to another, lurching from side to side as the train swept curves and rounded corners. I was very unhappy, but tried to look stolidly away from the pale face and the trembling hands. He reached for the strap swinging elusively above my head, and—well, I got up, for as his coat fell back I saw on his waistcoat the ribbon and the star of cannon bronze—the badge of the Grand Army of the Republic.

"Keep your seat, madam," he said, "I thank you just the same, but"—and he squared his shoulders as if on dress parade—"I am not as old as I look."

"Oh, I did not offer you the seat because you were old," I repited, "but because you were a soldier."

A smile flashed up into the faded eyes and lit the wrinkles in the pallid cheeks, and I have every reason to believe myself forgiven.—Chicago Post.

Lew Wallace's Present.

"When I first went as minister to Turkey," said General Lew Wallace, "a very funny thing happened me. One of the first and most important duties I had to fulfill was a call of state which I had to pay to the sultan. As first impressions are most lasting, I took particular pains to agreeably impress the sultan, and though somewhat perturbed in mind over the unaccustomed duty I acquitted myself very well—so much so that it led to one of the most embarrassing and laughable experiences of my whole life. Great was my astonishment shortly after arriving at home to receive a visit from one of the great functionaries of the sultan's court bearing a token of his highest esteem in the shape of an elegant present. It was a beautiful young lady from his own harem.

"You may imagine, if you can, the predicament I was in. If I should refuse to accept the present, it might seriously offend his majesty and cause serious international complications. On the other hand, if I accepted the beauty, how could I ever explain to the American people? And there was Mrs. Wallace!

"The short of it was that I sent her back, and next day I succeeded in explaining to the sultan the position it would place me in before my people at home, and convinced him that it would not be wise for me to accept such a gift. He eventually replaced the present with one much more satisfactory—to Mrs. Wallace at least."—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

The Old City of Damascus.

A recent work on sanitary engineering says that Damascus possesses in all probability the oldest waterworks in the world. The city itself is the most ancient of existing cities, having seen the rise and fall of the Greek and Roman empires, of Babylon, Nineveh, Palmyra and Jerusalem. When taken by the Saracens from the Romans, the waterworks already existed, and it is probable that the latter constructed the works which still exist and supply the town. Damascus lies in a valley on the river Albana, which flows from the Lebanon hills and is lost in the desert to the east of the town. In spite of a copious supply of excellent water, Damascus has had no immunity from epidemics, owing to the fact that the double canalization for water supply and drainage, being more or less leaky, saturated the soil and raised the spring level nearly to the surface, and the sewers are rarely if ever cleaned, are not systematically ventilated, and they pass under many of the houses. It is not surprising, therefore, that Damascus is and always was an insalubrious town.

Christianizers.

An enterprising firm in Caribou purchased several dozen wire springs designed for holding the restive tail of a cow during the task of milking. A revival was in progress at the time, and all of one farmer's family and his hired man had "experienced religion," but the old gentleman himself said he could never become a Christian while he had to milk the cows, for he couldn't help swearing when one of their tails struck him across the face. This firm heard of the man, sought him out and finally succeeded in disposing of one of their springs to him under the solemn assurance that it would entirely cure him of profanity. And from that day to this those springs have never been known as anything but "Christianizers."—Lewiston Journal.

The "Mule Shearer" Spider.

Yucatan is the home of an uncanny species of spider, known all over Central America as the "mule shearer." This queer representative of the mygale family has a habit of creeping up the legs of mules and horses and shearing off the hair that surrounds the hoof, especially the fetlock. The hair gained in this curious operation is used by the insect as a nest building material and is removed from the leg of the mule or horse by a strong pair of mandibles, which resemble those of a "pinching" bug. Animals bitten by the "mule shearer" always lose their hoofs.—St. Louis Republic.

The Family.

"I wish, sir, to ask for the hand of your daughter in marriage."

"But are you in a position to support a family?"

"Oh, I think so, sir!"

"Yes; but you must consider the matter pretty carefully, for there are 10 of us!"—Fliegende Blatter.

Vigilant and Thirteen.

If the thirteen superstition hadn't many more lives than a cat, it would receive its deathblow from the Vigilant. There are 13 members in the syndicate which owns her, and she won her last race with the Valkyrie on the 13th of October.—New York Herald.

The Trouble.

Passenger—Why, guard, how's this? There's no room in this train!

Guard—There's room enough, but there are too many passengers.—Tit-Bits.

THE ALASKAN INDIANS.

Their Peculiar Belief About Reincarnation and Future Existence.

The Alaska Indians believe in reincarnation, the person at each succeeding birth being of the same sex and retaining the same peculiar physical characteristics. It is affirmed that Harsha, a great chief of the Wrangels who died some 300 years ago and at whose death 20 slaves were sacrificed, has since been reincarnated five times, and at each birth he has been recognized by the mark of a stab or a cut in the right groin. At one time, during one of these later incarnations, while yet a lad, in order to prove his memory of a previous existence, he took friends to a cave and found for them certain articles of clothing hidden there and which had belonged to Harsha. These he identified and separated from the clothing belonging to others.

Sakunda has been reincarnated three times and recognized by a peculiar lock of gray hair. The Auk chief, Ko-wee, always claimed that he had lived once before on this earth. A legend is told of a Chilcat Indian who was shot, and his body lay all day upon the ground, and at night his spirit returned, took possession of it and continued its earth life for several years. He said that he did not feel freed from the earth, though he ascended upon the ladder to the high heaven, but all the time there was a longing to return, and he looked down through the opening and saw far beneath him the earth, with its tall trees like so many needles sticking up. He was afraid to jump, but the longing to return was so intense that he summoned all his courage and leaped to the earth, when he landed on a bed of soft moss near where his body was lying. He crept back into it and awoke again to earth life.

Almost countless are the tales the Indians will tell you of the life beyond, of the messages which have come back to them, of the visits they have made there in dreams, and though often their stories are contradictory in details yet through them all there is a firm belief in future existence into which they pass with all life's experience, an immortal life whose joys and sorrows are the result of the remembrance or forgetfulness of friends.—Juneau (Alaska) Journal.

The Pickpocket's Hat.

On his way to one of the stations at Buda-Pesth a French gentleman recently went into a hatter's shop and bought and put on a hat which had attracted him by its somewhat unusual color and shape. When he had been walking up and down the station some few minutes, he was astonished to find in one of his overcoat pockets a purse full of money and in the other a gold watch. He went at once to the station master and found him listening to the complaints of a countryman who had just lost his purse.

The purse was the one which the Frenchman was returning, but when it had been lost it had contained only 10 shillings. Now it held nearly as many pounds. The mystery was soon explained. A policeman came to the station master to report the arrest of a pickpocket. He was immediately brought in and confessed the theft of the purse, into which he had put the proceeds of previous robberies and of the watch. He had "passed" them into the Frenchman's pockets because of his hat. He explained that hats of that peculiar pattern, which are made only by one firm, are the badge of a large international gang of pickpockets, and so he had taken the Frenchman for a confederate.

The hatter bore out the statement, saying that he had recently sent a large consignment of hats of that kind abroad, to a place which the pickpocket named. But he was able to prove that he had no complicity in the base uses for which his wares were intended.—London Daily News.

How to Test Oil.

Petroleum is now much used for cooking and heating purposes. There are cheap oils which are dear at any price. The principal danger lies in the impurity of the oil, and cheap oils are never pure. Dr. Hagaman has been lecturing in Philadelphia on the subject of safe and unsafe oils and assures us that in order to be safe an oil should have a flash test of at least 130 degrees. It is well that householders should know how to ascertain what the flash test of any given oil is before using it. The method is simplicity itself. Take any small vessel or pan that can stand heat and half fill it with fine sand. On this pour some of the oil to be tested and place in the mixture a thermometer. Now put it on the kitchen range so that the heat may gradually rise and watch the thermometer. Hold at the same time a very thin lighted taper over it. When the thermometer has risen sufficiently, the vapor will ignite. The temperature is the flash point. By the way, servants ought to be warned against the practice of filling a lamp quite full.—Pittsburg Dispatch.

Concrete Ornamentation.

A successful application has been made, it appears, of the newly invented road concrete, some time ago described in the papers of Germany, and its usefulness in various directions seems to be assured. Curiously enough, shavings and planing mill chips, either in common or fancy woods, and which may be stained before use if desired, are mixed with cheese—or rather casein—calcined magnesian limestone, glycerin, silicate of soda and a little linseed oil, and this combination of substances is forced by hydraulic pressure into molds where it is allowed sufficient time to harden. When dry, the composition is strong and solid and can be sawed, planed, polished and varnished. Among its various proposed uses are ornamental panels and wall surface coverings, etc.—New York Sun.

Skirmish Fighting.

The French revolution introduced a new system of tactics into European armies. There was no time to drill the new levies, and as the advantages of skirmish fighting in loose order had been proved during the American war this system was adopted with signal success. The advantage of the system against regular troops in broken or wooded ground gave the French a reputation for rapidity of action that had never been known before on the battlefield.—Exchange.

A Scheme That Failed.

"I hear that Sammerby and his wife are trying to get a divorce. What is the trouble?"

"Incompatibility of temper. You see, they made an agreement when they were wed that they should never both get angry at the same time. The result is that instead of both getting mad at once and fighting it out one or the other is angry all the time, and they don't have any happy moments at all."—Indianapolis Journal.

Pleasant Politeness.

Fond Mother—And so you gave up your seat to a young lady in the street car. That was very polite. Did you have to stand up the whole way?

Little Boy—Oh, no, I didn't stand up at all. I climbed up in her lap.—Good News.

Prudent Horace.

Miss Mabel (in tearful burst of confidence)—Mamma, I'm so disappointed in Horace! You can't think!

Mamma—What's the matter now, dear? Have you quarreled?

Miss Mabel—No, but when I told him my birthday came Dec. 25 he said, "Dearest, let us be married that day!" I do believe he was thinking how much money he would save in making presents if all our anniversaries came on Christmas!—Chicago Tribune.